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INFO RUEHXK/ARAB ISRAELI COLLECTIVE PRIORITY
RHEHNSC/WHITE HOUSE NSC PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L JERUSALEM 002024

SIPDIS

NEA FOR FRONT OFFICE, NSC FOR ABRAMS/PASCUAL/RAMCHAND

E.O. 12958: DECL: 11/12/2018

TAGS: [KWBG](#) [IS](#) [PGOV](#) [PTER](#) [PHUM](#)

SUBJECT: CEASEFIRE THREATENED AS MILITANTS, IDF TRADE BLOWS

Classified By: Consul General Jake Walles, for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

¶1. (C) Summary. IDF incursions and airstrikes into the Gaza Strip have killed eleven Palestinians (all acknowledged Hamas and PIJ militants) since November 4, and injured 15 civilians, according to Gazan political and security contacts. Media accounts tally 68 rocket and mortar strikes in Israel from November 4-12. Hamas leaders tell Palestinian political contacts they remain committed to the ceasefire "despite severe Israeli violations." End summary.

IDF Fire Kills 4 Hamas Militants Near Kissufim

¶2. (C) Independent PLC member Rawiya al-Shawwa told PolOff November 12 that Hamas reports that four of its fighters were killed by IDF fire in al-Qarara (near Khan Yunis and the defunct Kissufim crossing) the morning of November 12. Palestinian press report that Israeli combat vehicles penetrated more than 200 meters past the perimeter fence during the IDF's operation. Al-Shawwa said she spoke with Hamas leaders Ismayil Haniyah and Mahmud al-Zahar after the shooting, and that both said they are committed to preserving the ceasefire despite "severe Israeli violations." Al-Shawwa said Hamas has stationed police along the Gaza Strip's perimeter from Shuja'iya (on the outskirts of Gaza City near the perimeter fence) to Bayt Hanun to prevent rocket fire. PolOff observed no activity on the Gaza perimeter by 1200 local, and the Kissufim Crossing area was quiet. (Note: There is also no indication of an imminent major Israeli ground operation in Gaza; as of 1200 local, Gaza-area IDF installations were at normal activity levels and vehicle staging configurations, with only vehicle maintenance and dismounted training visible. End note).

7 Killed in Earlier Airstrikes,
Followed by Rocket/Mortar Barrage

¶3. (U) The November 12 clashes follow Israeli airstrikes against Hamas and PIJ militants November 4-6 that killed seven Palestinians. Hamas claimed in local press statements that it fired, and allowed PIJ, al-Aqsa Brigades and PRC militants to launch, over 60 rockets and mortars into Israel as "legitimate retaliation for grave invasions and murders." Hamas claimed that it banned rocket attacks by November 6, but strikes have continued through November 12, including six mortars that landed in Israel at approximately 1600 local.
WALLES